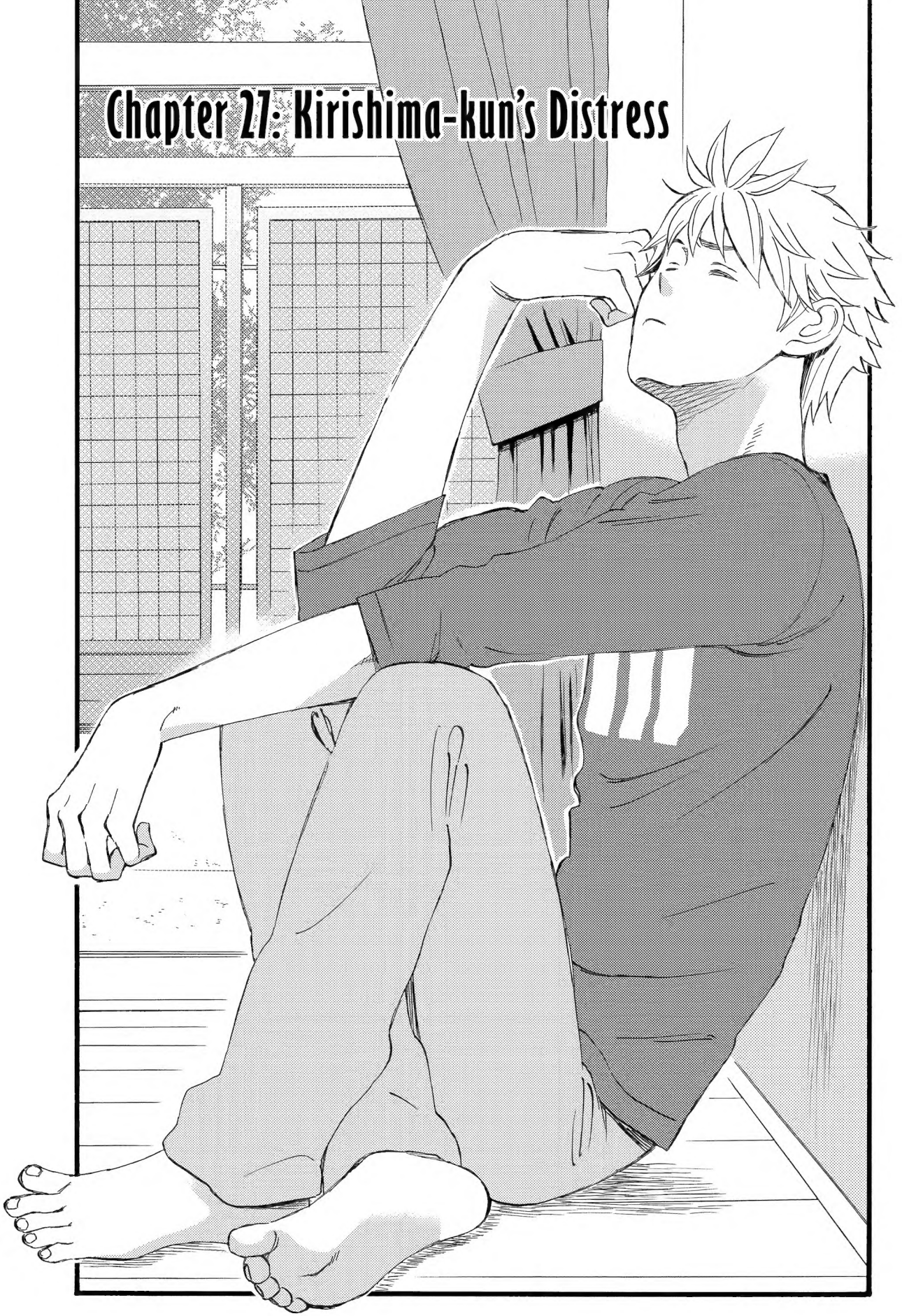
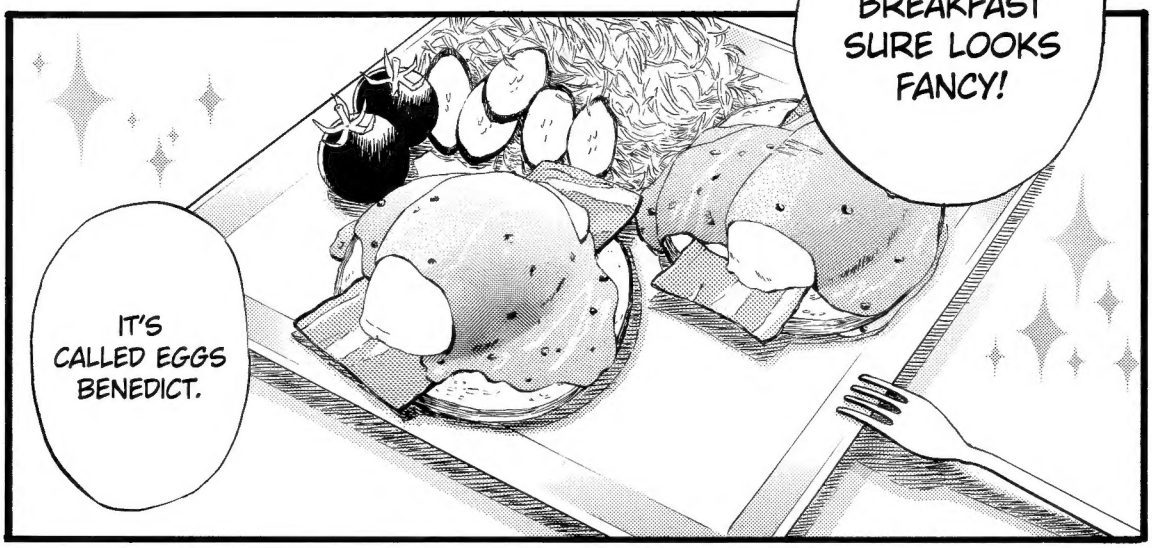
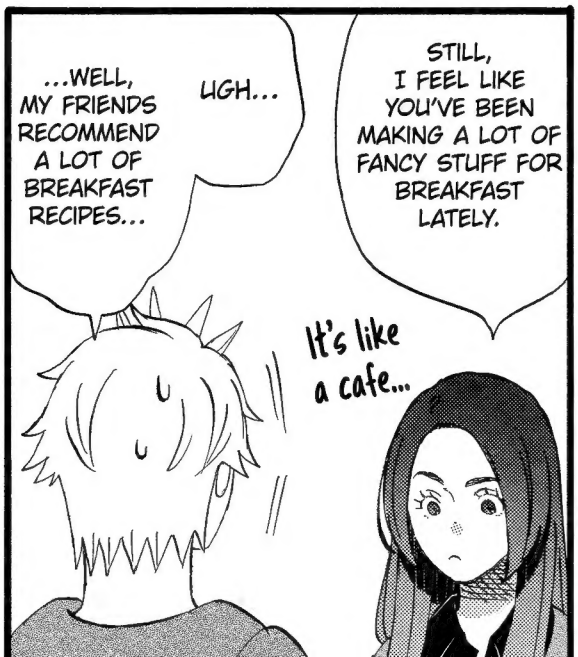
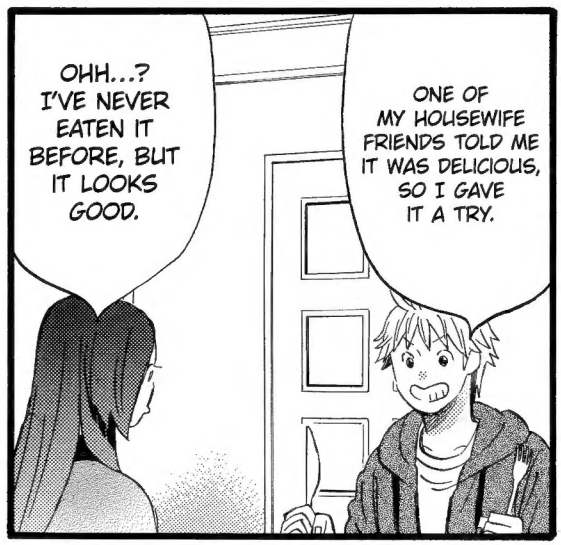
Chapter 27: Kirishima-kun's Distress



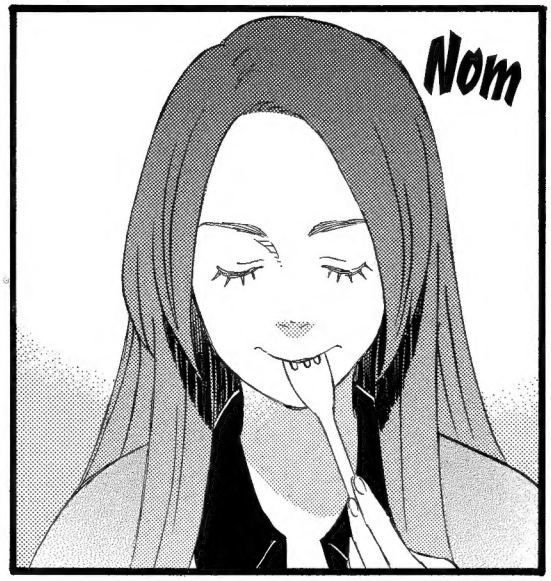

OHH... BREAKFAST SURE LOOKS FANCY!
IT'S CALLED EGGS BENEDICT.


STILL, I FEEL LIKE YOU'VE BEEN MAKING A LOT OF FANCY STUFF FOR BREAKFAST LATELY.
UGH...
...WELL, MY FRIENDS RECOMMEND A LOT OF BREAKFAST RECIPES...
It's like a cafe...

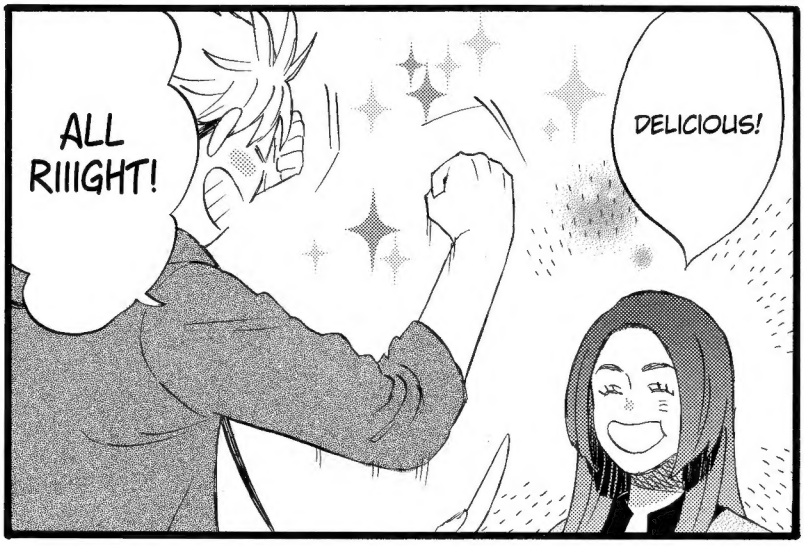

ONE OF MY HOUSEWIFE FRIENDS TOLD ME IT WAS DELICIOUS, SO I GAVE IT A TRY.
OHH...? I'VE NEVER EATEN IT BEFORE, BUT IT LOOKS GOOD.

LET'S DIG IN!
CLAP

I LIKE THEM, BUT I'M WORRIED ABOUT THE NUTRITIONAL IMBALANCE.
YOU'VE BEEN REPEATING PASTA DISHES MANY TIMES, TOO.
PLEASE BE CAREFUL.
OKAAY...

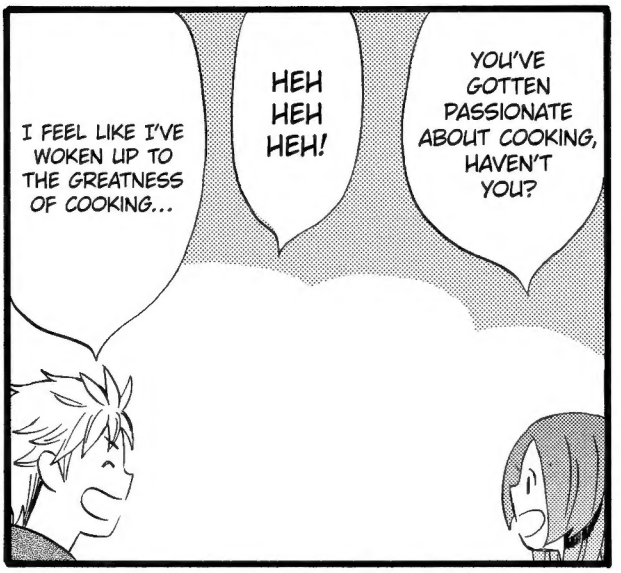

Nom

Slice

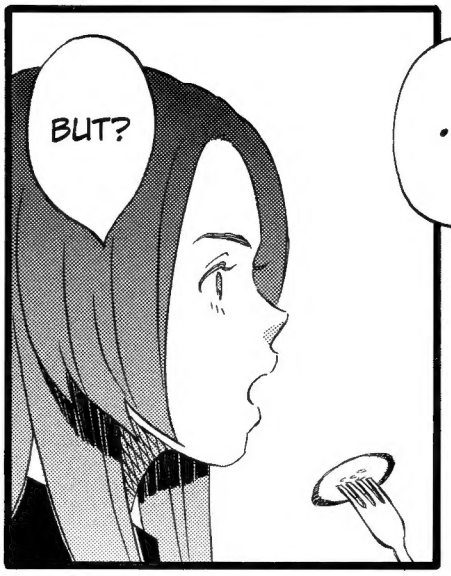

ALL RIIIGHT!
DELICIOUS!

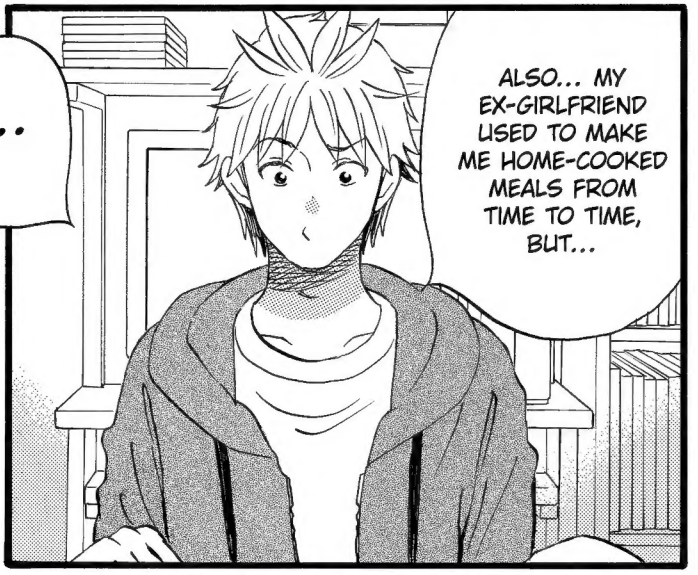
HOW IS IT?
HNN...!
Munch Munch

I'M IN A STATE OF, "COOKING IS AMAZING! I'M AMAZING!"
IT'S LIKE I CAN DO ALMOST ANYTHING IN THE KITCHEN NOW!
OHH...
Yaaay!

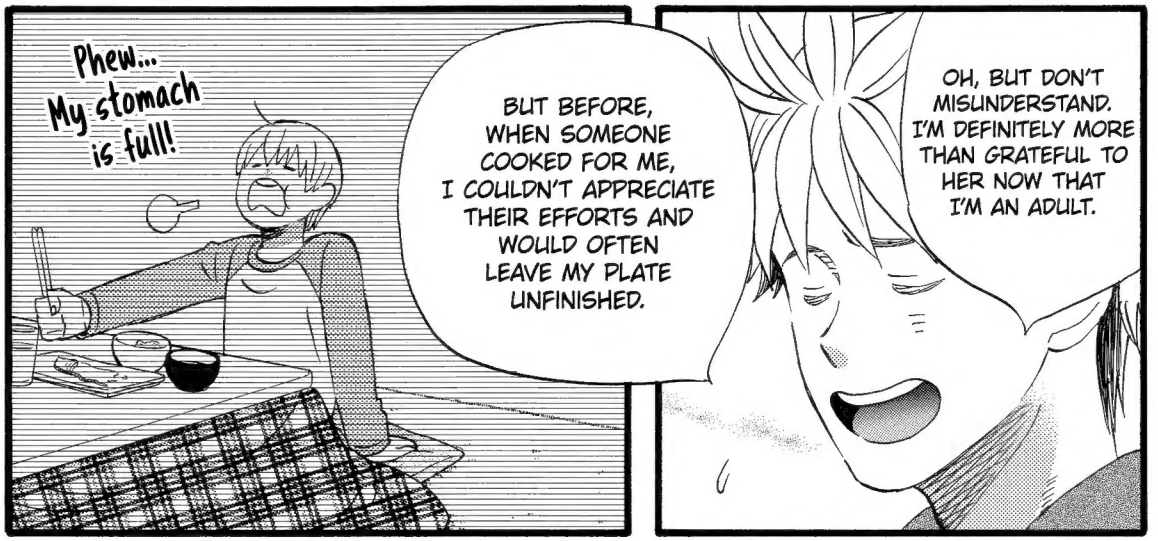

I FEEL LIKE I'VE WOKEN UP TO THE GREATNESS OF COOKING...
HEH HEH HEH!
YOU'VE GOTTEN PASSIONATE ABOUT COOKING, HAVEN'T YOU?

OH, NO... NOT AT ALL.
I WAS IN A SERIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH CONVENIENCE STORE FOOD.
YOU LIVED ALONE BEFORE, RIGHT? DID YOU COOK BACK THEN?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE A HOPELESS CASE AT FIRST, BUT HEY... IT TURNS OUT YOU'RE PRETTY TALENTED!

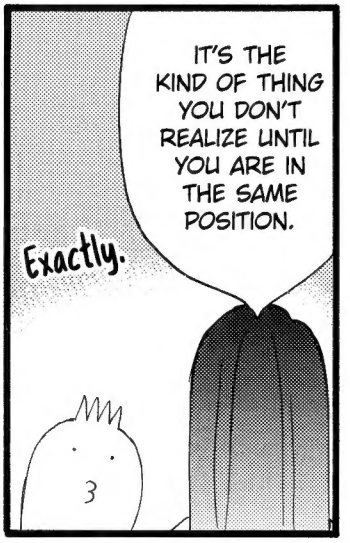

BUT?

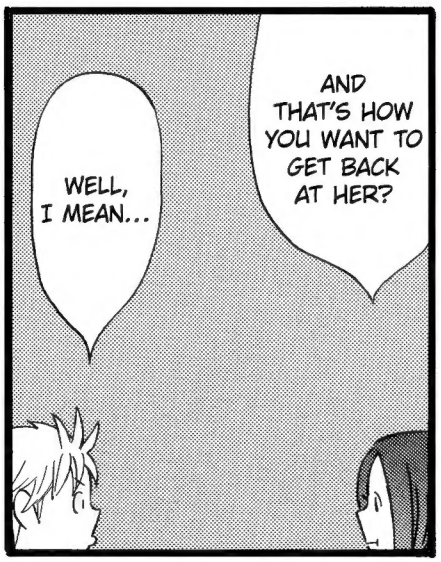

...
ALSO... MY EX-GIRLFRIEND USED TO MAKE ME HOME-COOKED MEALS FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT...

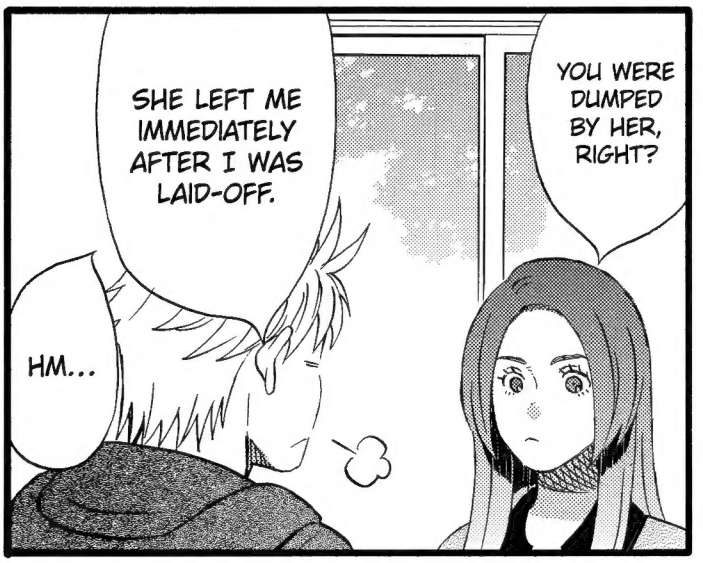
COME TO THINK OF IT, IT'S DEFINITELY BECAUSE OF HER COOKING THAT I DEVELOPED A TASTE DISORDER!
IF I WERE YOUR MOTHER, I'D KICK YOU IN THE SHINS FOR SAYING THAT.
I FEEL LIKE MY MOTHER WASN'T A GREAT COOK, EITHER.
AFTER I STARTED COOKING FOR MYSELF, I REALIZED THAT SHE ACTUALLY WASN'T VERY GOOD AT IT.

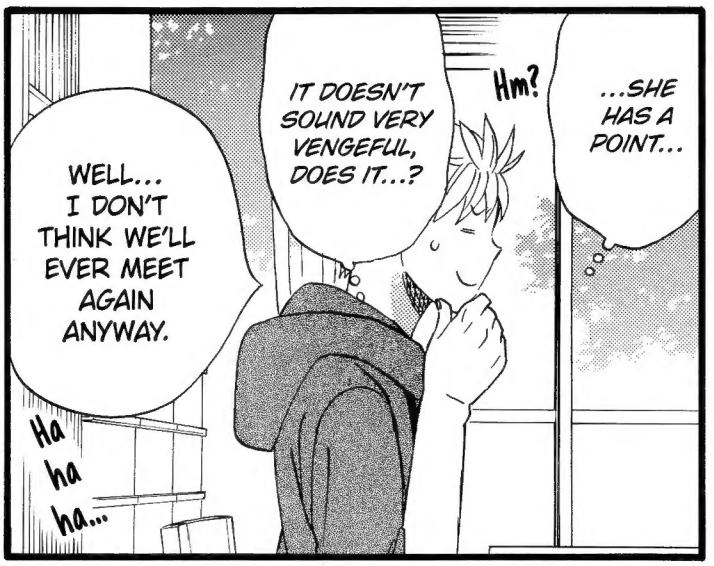

Phew... My stomach is full!
BUT BEFORE, WHEN SOMEONE COOKED FOR ME, I COULDN'T APPRECIATE THEIR EFFORTS AND WOULD OFTEN LEAVE MY PLATE UNFINISHED.
OH, BUT DON'T MISUNDERSTAND. I'M DEFINITELY MORE THAN GRATEFUL TO HER NOW THAT I'M AN ADULT.

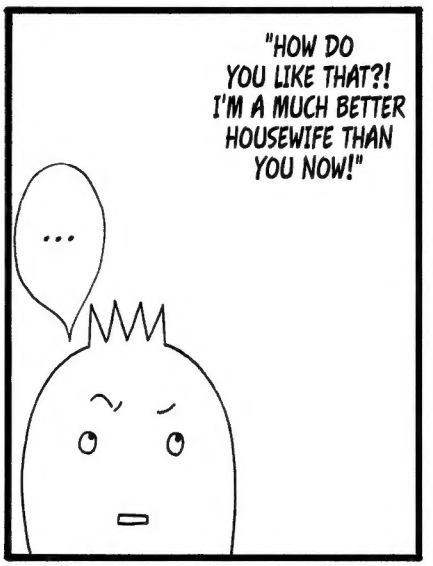
"YOU WANT TO BE A REAL HOUSEWIFE WITH THAT LEVEL OF COOKING? HAH! DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!"... I FEEL LIKE I COULD SAY THAT TO HER NOW.
HEH HEHH!
AS FOR MY GIRLFRIEND, I GUESS I HAD A STRONG DESIRE TO GET BACK AT HER, WHICH HELPED ME GROW AS A COOK.
Only her stew dishes were decent.


IT'S THE KIND OF THING YOU DON'T REALIZE UNTIL YOU ARE IN THE SAME POSITION.
Exactly.


AND THAT'S HOW YOU WANT TO GET BACK AT HER?
WELL, I MEAN...


YOU WERE DUMPED BY HER, RIGHT?
SHE LEFT ME IMMEDIATELY AFTER I WAS LAID-OFF.
HM...


...SHE HAS A POINT...
Hm?
IT DOESN'T SOUND VERY VENGEFUL, DOES IT...?
WELL... I DON'T THINK WE'LL EVER MEET AGAIN ANYWAY.
Ha ha ha...


"HOW DO YOU LIKE THAT?! I'M A MUCH BETTER HOUSEWIFE THAN YOU NOW!"
...

I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE ABOUT THAT...!!
Serious

WHAT'S THIS? A WESTERN TV DRAMA?
THE GOOD NEWS OR THE BAD NEWS... WHICH ONE DO YA WANNA HEAR FIRST?
I'VE BEEN ADDICTED TO THEM LATELY.

I'VE GOT SOME NEWS FOR MY DEAR FRIEND WHO'S FULLY ENJOYIN' HIS HOUSE-HUSBAND LIFE.
... WHAT?
NEWS...?

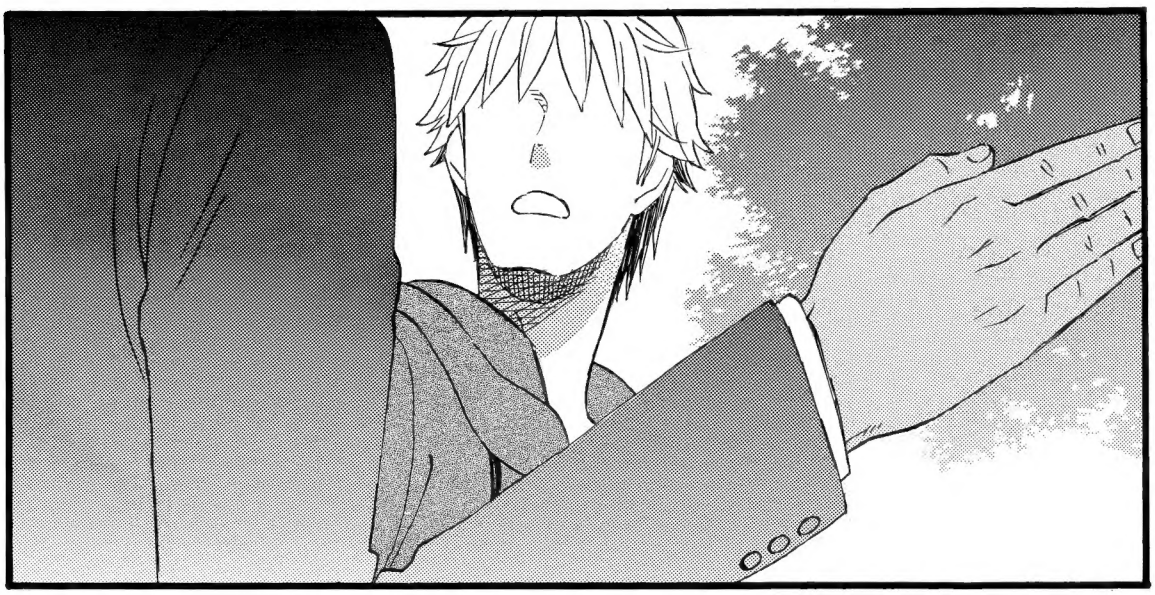
SO YOU'RE THE TYPE WHO PREFERS TO HEAR THE BAD FIRST, EH?
Ohh?
WELL, THEN... START WITH THE BAD NEWS, PLEASE.
KNOWING THERE'S GOOD NEWS WAITING FOR ME LATER MAKES ME FEEL BETTER ABOUT HEARING THE BAD NEWS FIRST.

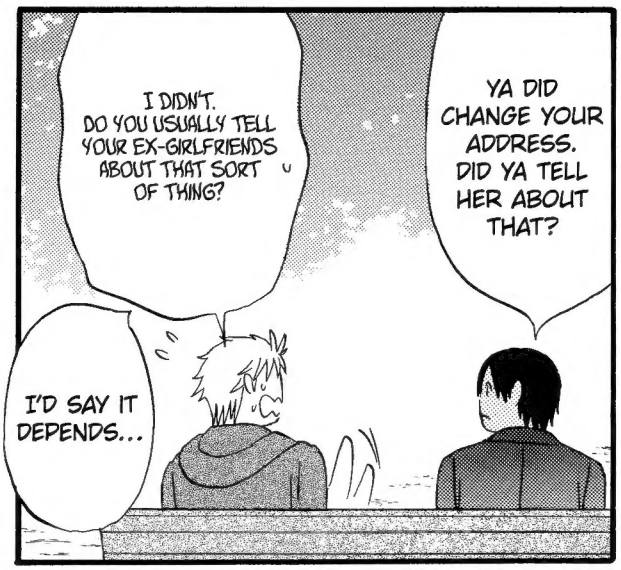
"YOU SEE A CRISIS, I SEE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY."
SO I'VE BEEN SPENDING TIME TRYING TO COME UP WITH COOLER-SOUNDING LINES LIKE...
THE HECK? SOUNDS FUN.

GOTCHA. I'LL START WITH THE BAD NEWS!

Heh heh!
I DON'T THINK EVEN A MINOR SETBACK WOULD FAZE ME.
BESIDES, I'VE BEEN DOING WELL IN LIFE LATELY.

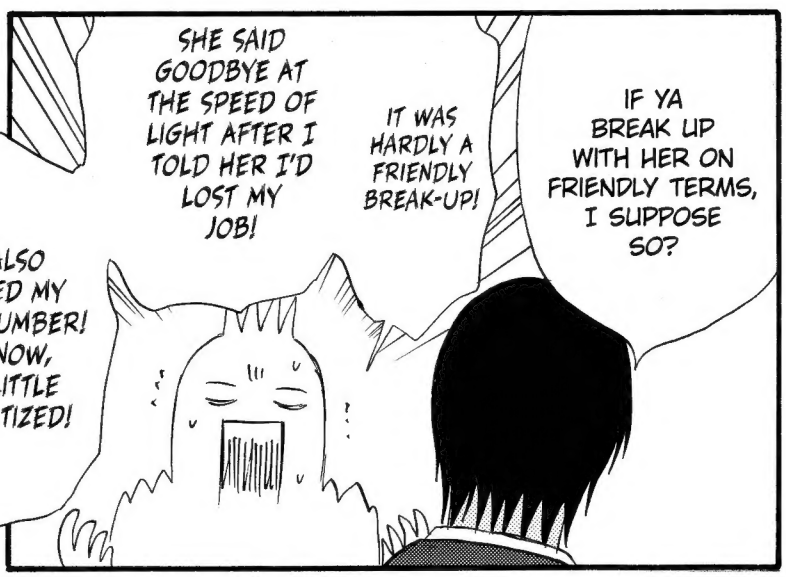
YOUR EX-GIRLFRIEND HAS BEEN LOOKIN' FOR YA.




I DIDN'T. DO YOU USUALLY TELL YOUR EX-GIRLFRIENDS ABOUT THAT SORT OF THING?
YA DID CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS. DID YA TELL HER ABOUT THAT?
I'D SAY IT DEPENDS...

BEATS ME...
What the hell?! That's scary!
W-W-W-W-WHY?!
BUT DAMN, IT SURE FAZED YA.

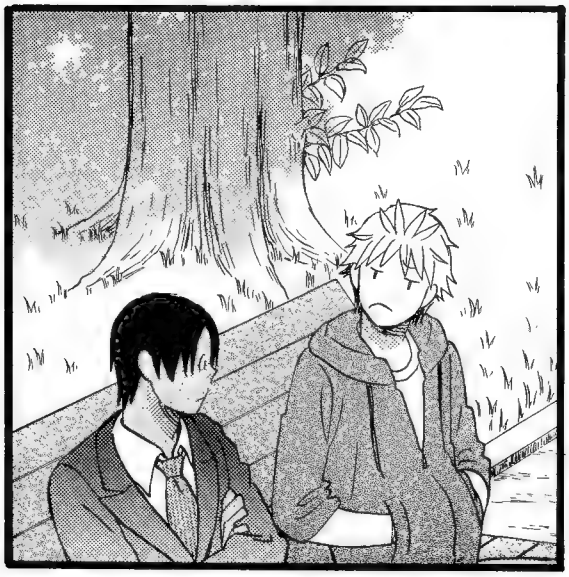
I'M SURPRISED YA TRIED TO CALL HER AFTER SHE DUMPED YA IN SUCH A CRUEL WAY...


SHE ALSO BLOCKED MY PHONE NUMBER! EVEN NOW, I'M A LITTLE TRAUMATIZED!
SHE SAID GOODBYE AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT AFTER I TOLD HER I'D LOST MY JOB!
IT WAS HARDLY A FRIENDLY BREAK-UP!
IF YA BREAK UP WITH HER ON FRIENDLY TERMS, I SUPPOSE SO?

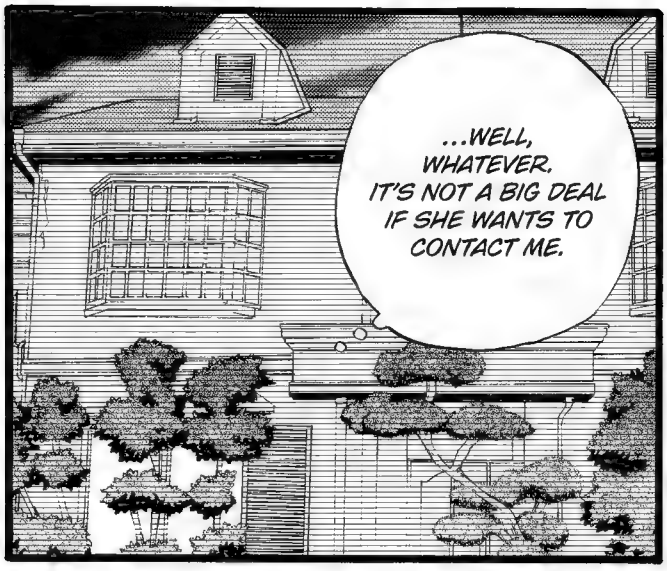
THANKS, MAN. I'M LUCKY I HAVE SUCH GOOD FRIENDS.
FOR REAL?

ME AND THE OTHER GUYS KNOW WHAT'S UP, SO WE'RE KEEPIN' OUR GUARD UP IN CASE SHE ASKS US.
NO WAY.
Tremble
...WAIT, DID YOU GIVE SAE MY NEW ADDRESS?!
Tremble

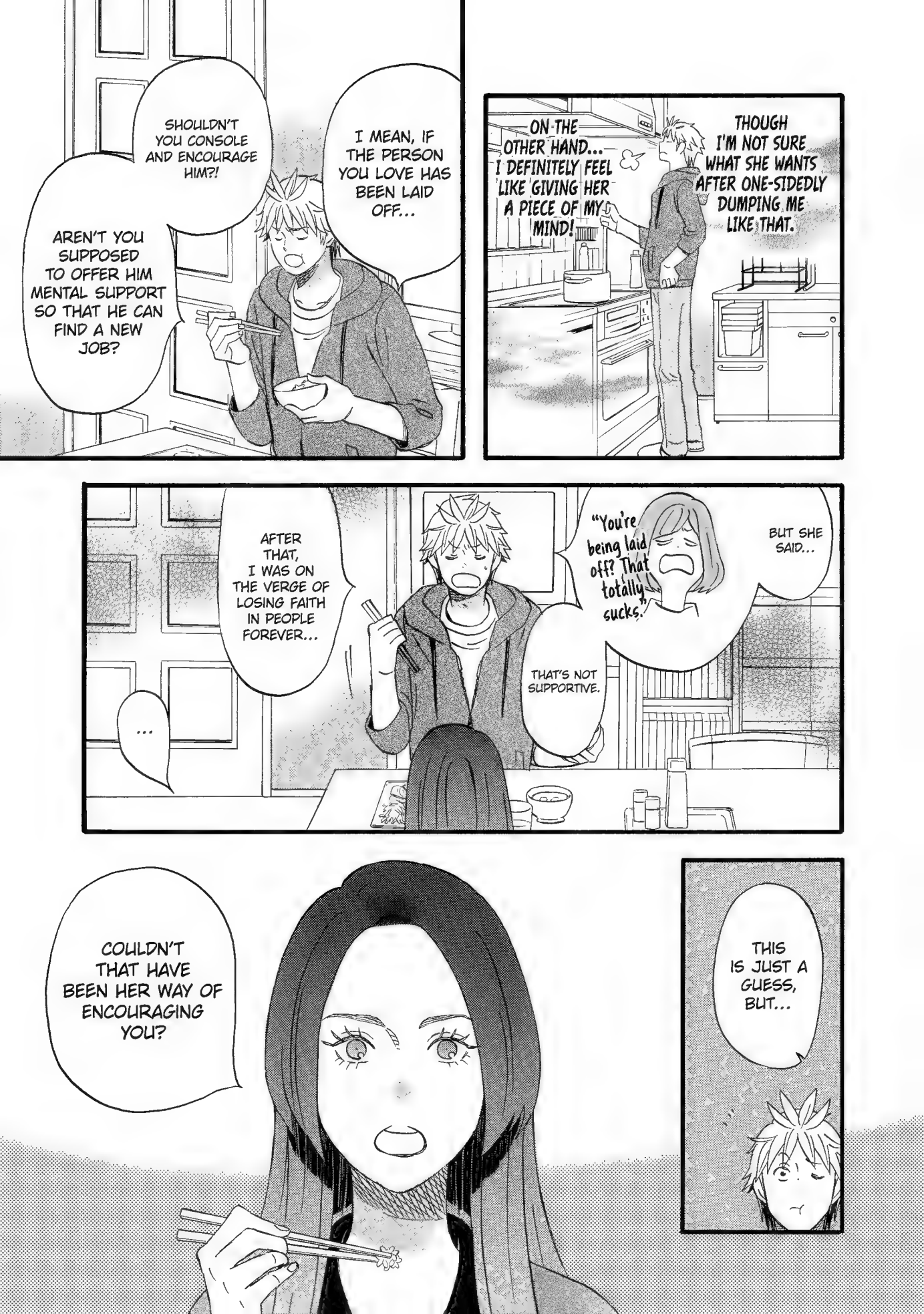
SO MUCH FOR HAVING GOOD FRIENDS...
You should brace yourself...
SO I THINK THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT SOMEONE WHO KNOWS YA FROM COLLEGE WILL GIVE THAT INFO AWAY.
BUT IT SEEMS THAT SAE-CHAN AND HER FRIENDS HAVE BEEN HELLA PERSISTENT...



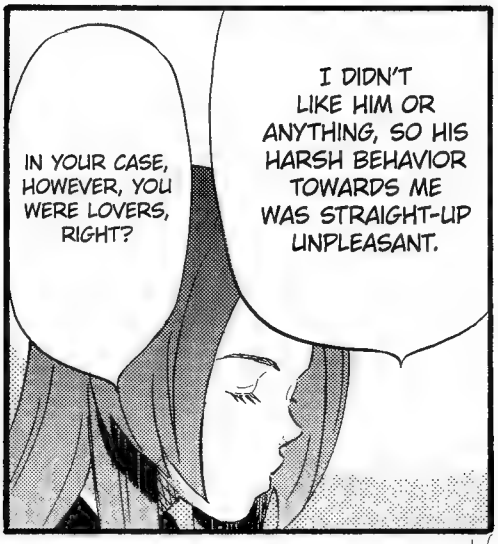
THEN, WHAT'S THE GOOD NEWS?
SHIT...

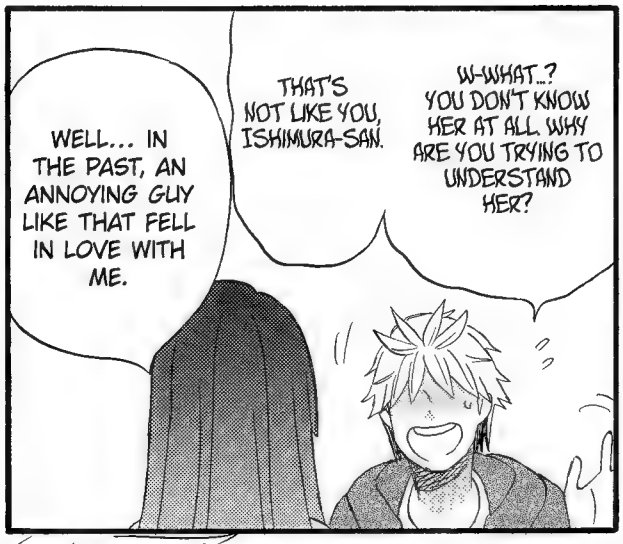

...WELL, WHATEVER. IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL IF SHE WANTS TO CONTACT ME.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT KIKUCHI'S MOUTH ULCER HAS HEALED.
I'LL BEAT YA UP, KIKUCHI.

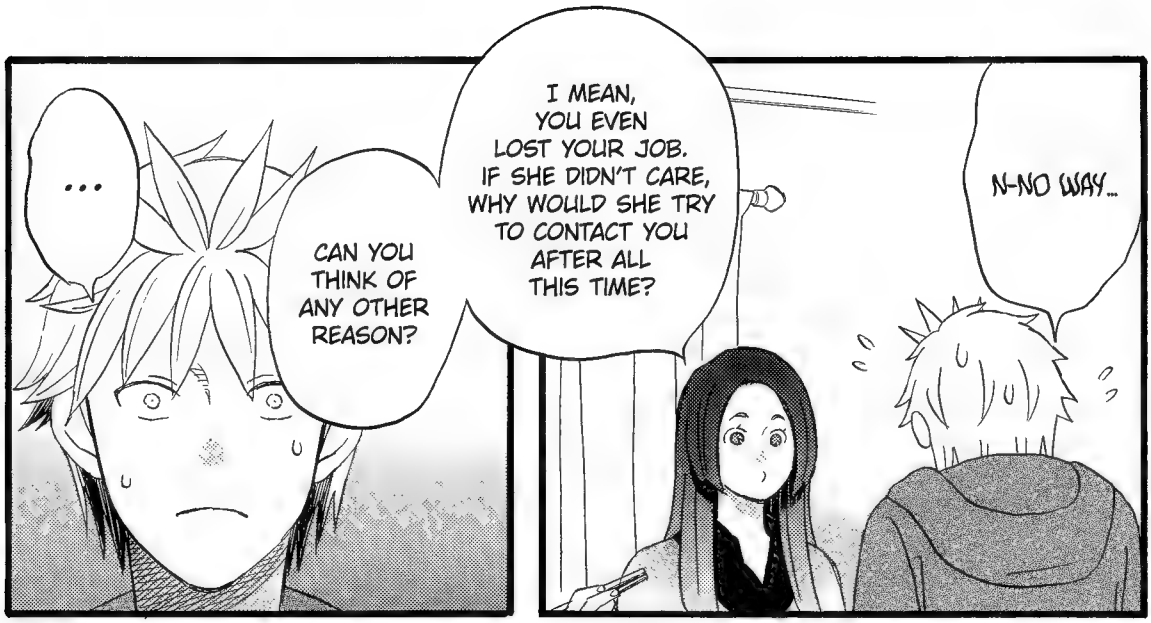

I MEAN, IF THE PERSON YOU LOVE HAS BEEN LAID OFF...
SHOULDN'T YOU CONSOLE AND ENCOURAGE HIM?!
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO OFFER HIM MENTAL SUPPORT SO THAT HE CAN FIND A NEW JOB?
THOUGH I'M NOT SURE WHAT SHE WANTS AFTER ONE-SIDEDLY DUMPING ME LIKE THAT.
ON THE OTHER HAND... I DEFINITELY FEEL LIKE GIVING HER A PIECE OF MY MIND!
BUT SHE SAID...
"You're being laid off? That totally sucks."
THAT'S NOT SUPPORTIVE.
AFTER THAT, I WAS ON THE VERGE OF LOSING FAITH IN PEOPLE FOREVER...
...
THIS IS JUST A GUESS, BUT...
COULDN'T THAT HAVE BEEN HER WAY OF ENCOURAGING YOU?

HUH?
MAYBE... SHE PUSHED YOU AWAY IN ORDER TO MOTIVATE YOU?
SHE MIGHT'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU TO CALL ONCE YOU'VE FOUND A NEW JOB.
...
MUNCH MUNCH

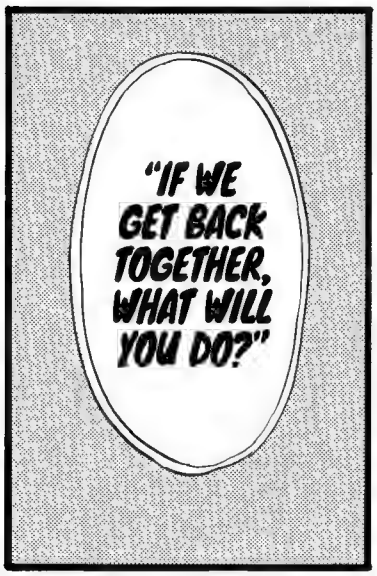

I DIDN'T LIKE HIM OR ANYTHING, SO HIS HARSH BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ME WAS STRAIGHT-UP UNPLEASANT.
IN YOUR CASE, HOWEVER, YOU WERE LOVERS, RIGHT?

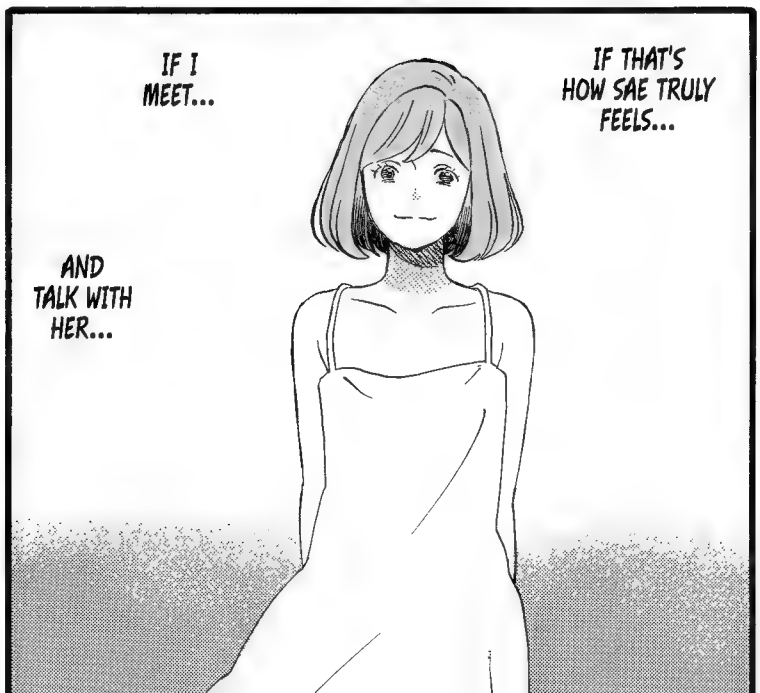

W-WHAT...? YOU DON'T KNOW HER AT ALL. WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO UNDERSTAND HER?
THAT'S NOT LIKE YOU, ISHIMURA-SAN.
WELL... IN THE PAST, AN ANNOYING GUY LIKE THAT FELL IN LOVE WITH ME.

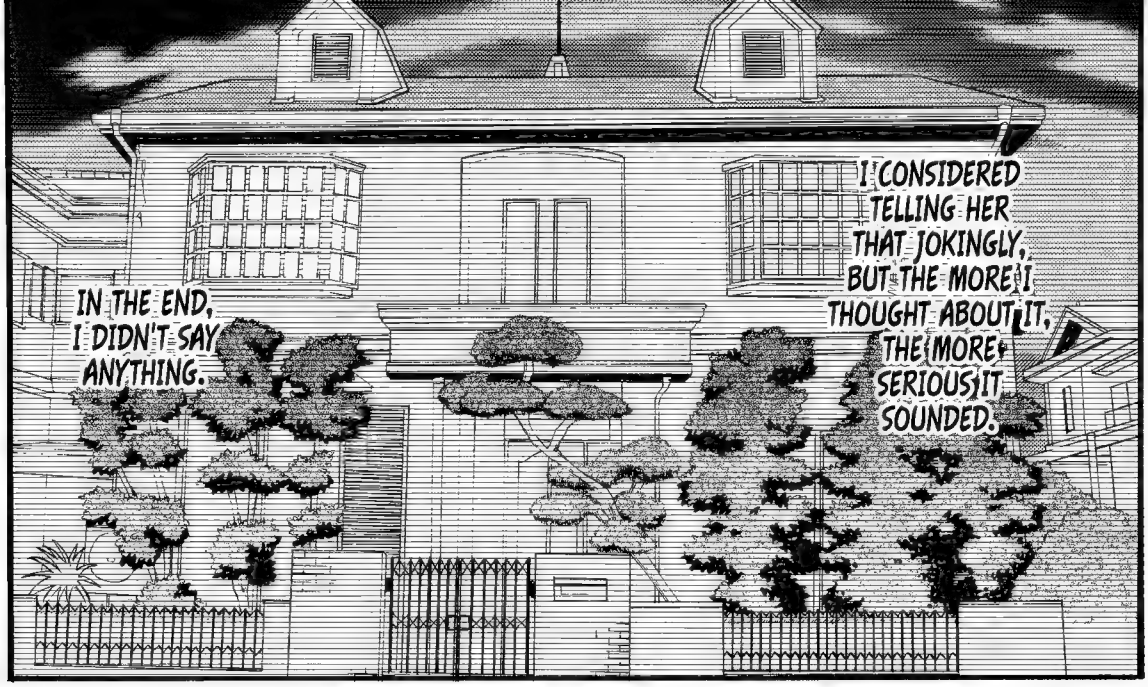
SO I THOUGHT... SHE MIGHT STILL CARE FOR YOU.
...

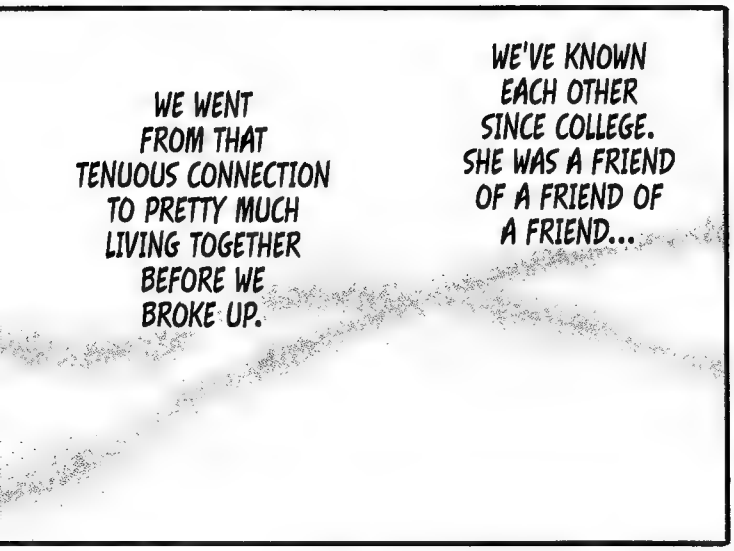

...
CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER REASON?
I MEAN, YOU EVEN LOST YOUR JOB. IF SHE DIDN'T CARE, WHY WOULD SHE TRY TO CONTACT YOU AFTER ALL THIS TIME?
N-NO WAY...

...I DON'T KNOW...
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...
ANYWAY... I THINK THE TWO OF YOU SHOULD HAVE A PROPER TALK AT LEAST ONCE.

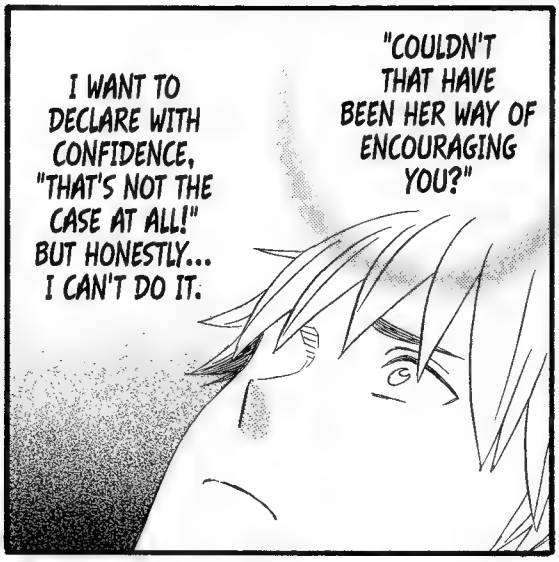

"IF WE GET BACK TOGETHER, WHAT WILL YOU DO?"


IF I MEET...
IF THAT'S HOW SAE TRULY FEELS...
AND TALK WITH HER...

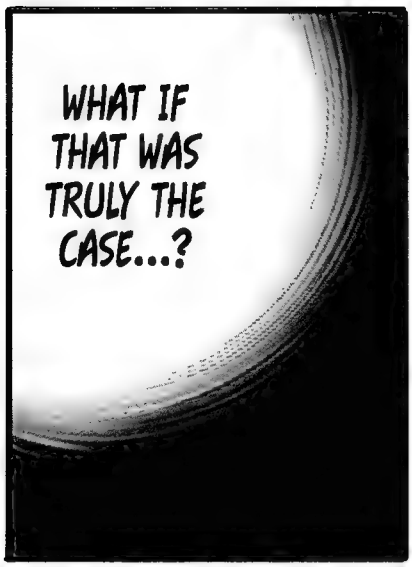

IN THE END, I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.
I CONSIDERED TELLING HER THAT JOKINGLY, BUT THE MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THE MORE SERIOUS IT SOUNDED.

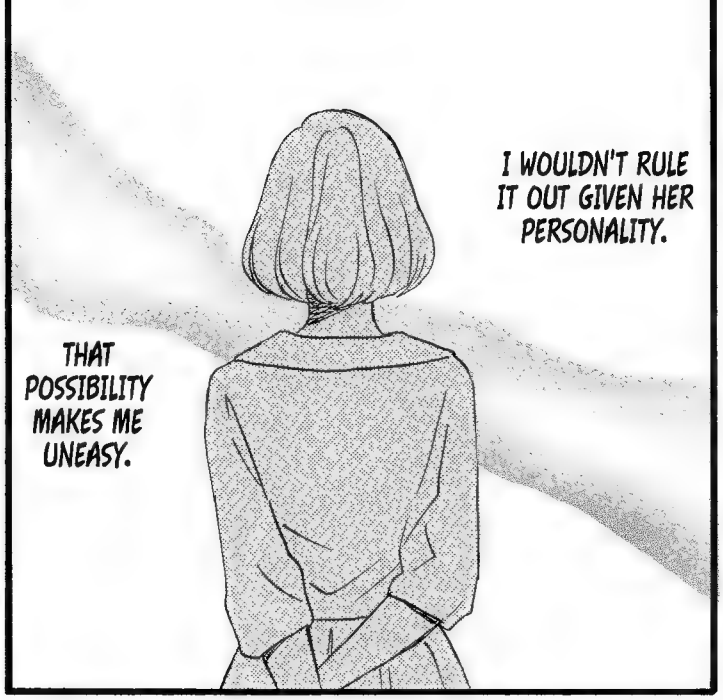

WE WENT FROM THAT TENUOUS CONNECTION TO PRETTY MUCH LIVING TOGETHER BEFORE WE BROKE UP.
WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE COLLEGE. SHE WAS A FRIEND OF A FRIEND OF A FRIEND...

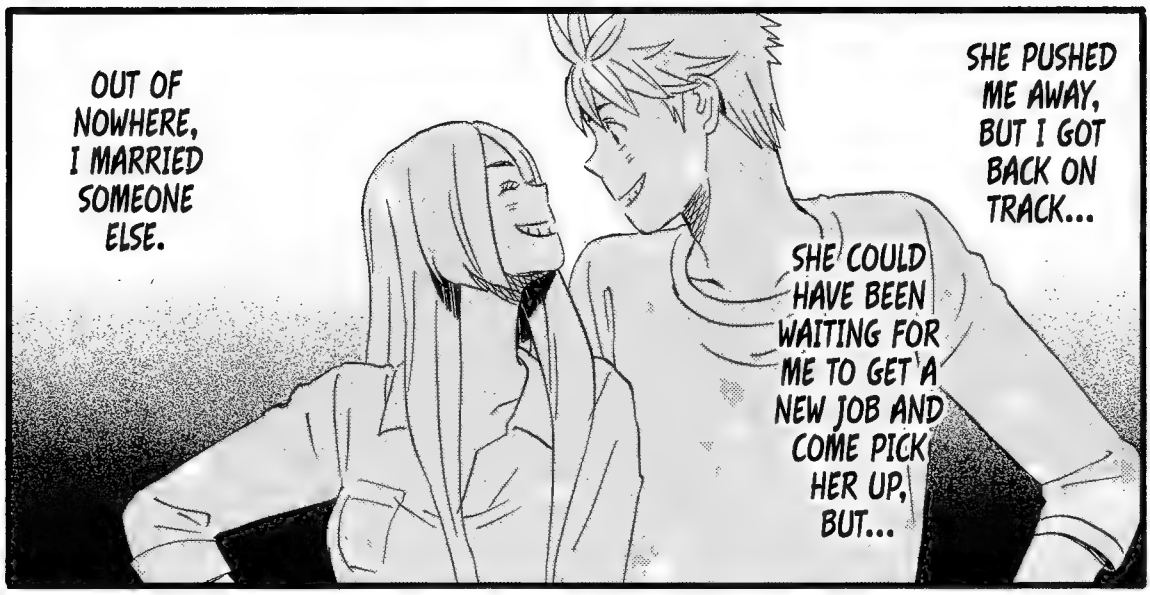
WHEN I LOOK BACK ON IT AGAIN, MY RELATIONSHIP WITH SAE WASN'T EXACTLY SHORT.
...

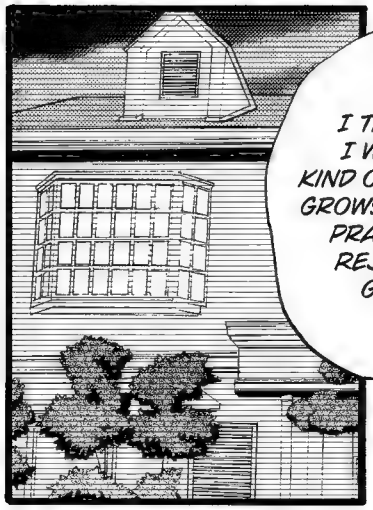

I WANT TO DECLARE WITH CONFIDENCE, "THAT'S NOT THE CASE AT ALL!" BUT HONESTLY... I CAN'T DO IT.
"COULDN'T THAT HAVE BEEN HER WAY OF ENCOURAGING YOU?"

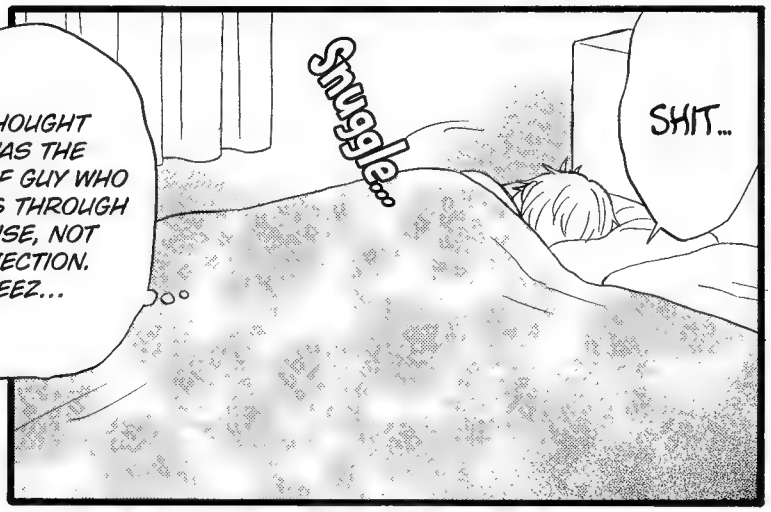
SHE COMPLAINED A LOT AND WAS A BIT SELFISH, BUT WE GOT ALONG WELL AND I ENJOYED BEING WITH HER...!


WHAT IF THAT WAS TRULY THE CASE...?

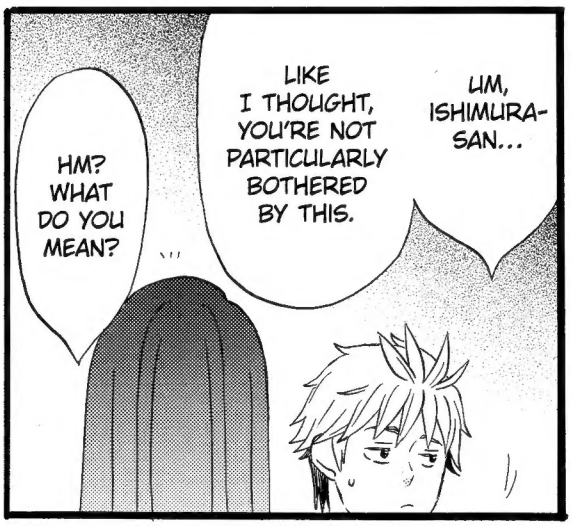

I WOULDN'T RULE IT OUT GIVEN HER PERSONALITY.
THAT POSSIBILITY MAKES ME UNEASY.

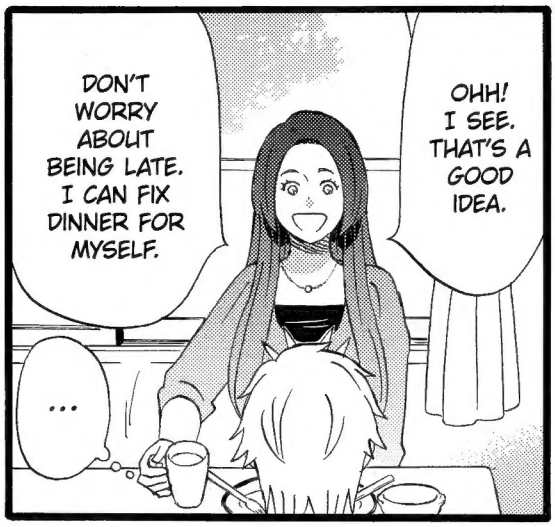

OUT OF NOWHERE, I MARRIED SOMEONE ELSE.
SHE PUSHED ME AWAY, BUT I GOT BACK ON TRACK...
SHE COULD HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR ME TO GET A NEW JOB AND COME PICK HER UP, BUT...



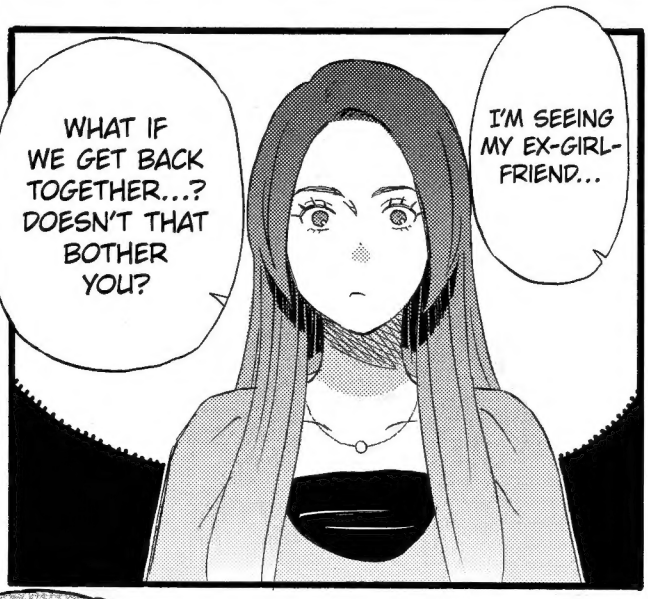

I THOUGHT I WAS THE KIND OF GUY WHO GROWS THROUGH PRAISE, NOT REJECTION. GEEZ...
Snuggle...
SHIT...

A FEW DAYS LATER...


HM? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
LIKE I THOUGHT, YOU'RE NOT PARTICULARLY BOTHERED BY THIS.
UM, ISHIMURA-SAN...


DON'T WORRY ABOUT BEING LATE. I CAN FIX DINNER FOR MYSELF.
OHH! I SEE. THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.
...

I WOULD FINALLY GET OUT OF YOUR WAY... RIGHT?
IN FACT, I'D BE HAPPY IF YOU GOT BACK TOGETHER.
NO. IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME.


WHAT IF WE GET BACK TOGETHER...? DOESN'T THAT BOTHER YOU?
I'M SEEING MY EX-GIRL-FRIEND...

AFTER ALL, YOU WOULD BE HAPPIER WITH SOMEONE OTHER THAN ME!

I'M SURE IT'LL BE WAY MORE FUN THAN BEING WITH ME.

I'M SURE YOUR EX-GIRLFRIEND WILL LET YOU SNUGGLE WITH HER MORE OFTEN.

SHE CAN ALSO READ THE ROOM A LOT BETTER THAN I CAN.

...

Ha ha...

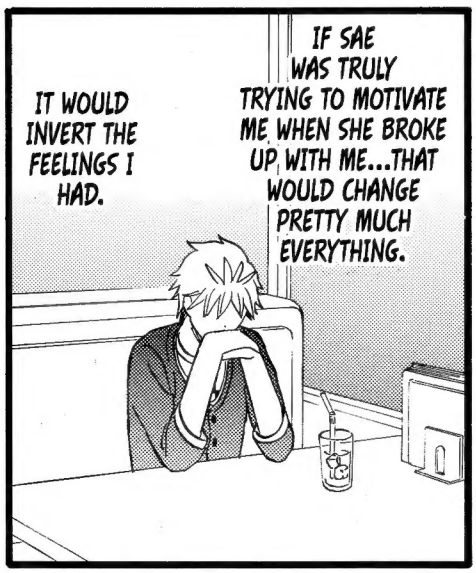
...YOUR MINDSET...

IS THE SAME AS ALWAYS.

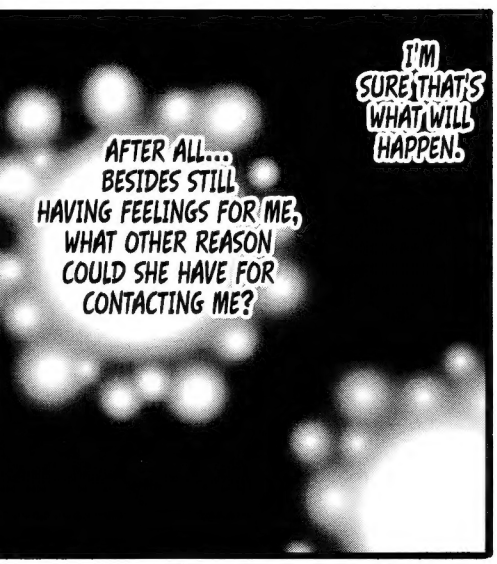
"THAT'S WHY YOUR LIFE PARTNER DEFINITELY CAN'T BE ME."

SHE NEVER HUGS OR KISSES ME, AND YET...

I STILL BELIEVED THAT ISHIMURA-SAN LOVED ME.

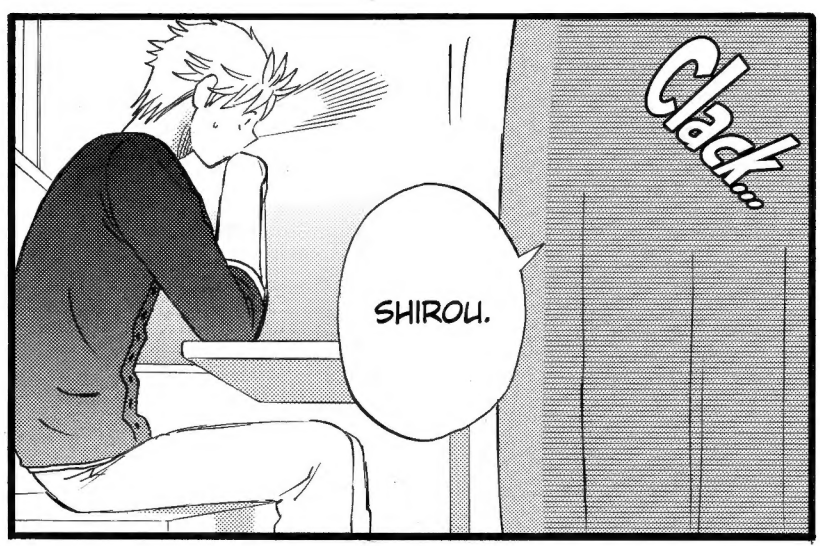

IT WOULD INVERT THE FEELINGS I HAD.
IF SAE WAS TRULY TRYING TO MOTIVATE ME WHEN SHE BROKE UP WITH ME...THAT WOULD CHANGE PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING.

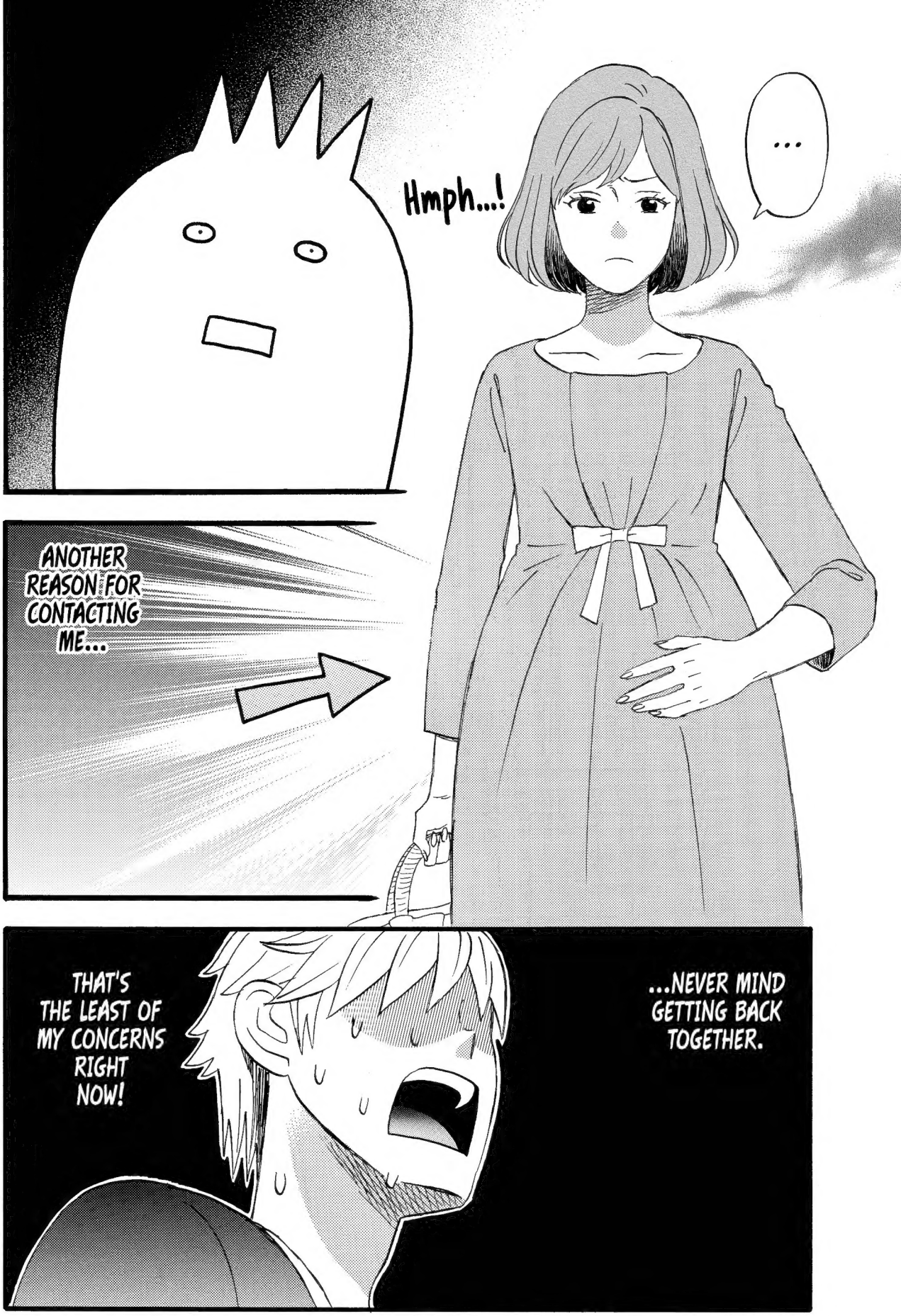
I WONDER... WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OUR RELATIONSHIP?
Jonthan's


I'M SURE THAT'S WHAT WILL HAPPEN.
AFTER ALL... BESIDES STILL HAVING FEELINGS FOR ME, WHAT OTHER REASON COULD SHE HAVE FOR CONTACTING ME?

FROM "WHAT A HEARTLESS WOMAN..."
TO...
"IF THAT'S YOUR WAY OF MOTIVATING ME, THEN DO IT BETTER, IDIOT!"

SAE...


Clack...
SHIROU.


Hmph...!
...
ANOTHER REASON FOR CONTACTING ME...
THAT'S THE LEAST OF MY CONCERNS RIGHT NOW!
...NEVER MIND GETTING BACK TOGETHER.